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AUTHOR Ward, Donald E.
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ABSTRACT

The utility of the discrimination model for counselor training, selection of techniques, and research is in the identification of definitive and measurable client interview behaviors, which may be viewed as "enabling outcomes." Eventually, it is hoped that use of specific counselor verbal response classes will result in predictable changes in the client's verbal interview behavior, which will then result in the readiness of the client to select specific behaviors for use in the real world outside of counseling. By examining what is involved when the client takes what he has learned about himself or what he has learned to do for himself and applies this knowledge to better manage the contingencies of day-to-day living, the questions of relevancy as well as accountability in counseling are faced. Finally, by bringing into focus the relationship between the counselor's behaviors and the outcomes of counseling, it is possible to help trainees to recognize that they do have immediate and observable effects upon their clients. (Author/SES)

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THE DISCRIMINATION MODEL: A PRACTICAL PARADIGM FOR THE DEMONSTRATION OF ACCOUNTABILITY[1]

Donald E. Ward
Purdue University

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THE DISCRIMINATION MODEL: A PRACTICAL PARADIGM FOR THE DEMONSTRATION OF ACCOUNTABILITY

It is essential that the counseling profession move beyond rhetoric in response to both external and internal demands to demonstrate the efficacy of the procedures used by counseling practitioners. The demand for accountability requires an added level of effort from counselor educators, for, in addition to insuring that counselor-trainees have acquired skills which may be demonstrated as being effective in bringing about client behavior change, counselor educators must also demonstrate the efficacy of their training procedures.

It would appear from the difficulty which seems to surround the issue of demonstrating accountability that simply being aware of the need and undertaking piecemeal evaluative studies do not result in substantial evidence with which to answer the challenge. A more feasible approach would result from the use of a model which is based on three premises:

(1) that human behavior is lawful,
(2) that the behavior of a specific human being in a two-person interaction is affected by the behavior of the other and also affects the behavior of the other, and
(3) that, in counseling, it is always client behavior that should be the focus of the counselor's efforts.

The utility of the discrimination model, which operates on these three assumptions, seems to be that, by its very nature, it suggests accountability in every act of the counselor and the counselor educator and provides a logical framework within which to test the efficacy of these acts.

The idea that every counselor response represents choices in terms of both content and structure is basic to the discrimination model. In addition, the treatment of counselor responses as discriminative stimuli implies that each response may be reinforcing antecedent and contiguous client behavior as well as stimulating subsequent client behavior. Viewing his/her actions in this way, the counselor should be constantly aware of the choices he/she has made, and should monitor client behavior to determine whether or not counseling goals are being met.

Cormier and Nye (1972) have presented a training model based upon discrimination training which consists of clearly-specified procedures and behaviorally-defined criteria. The emphasis on individualized instruction in order to make the model adaptable to individuals with varying basal levels seems to be a genuine step toward the use of demonstrably effective training procedures in a counselor-education program. In addition, the authors appear to have avoided the all too typical misapplication of individualized instruction techniques by allowing for flexibility in rate of learning, as well as in content and mode. Henderson (1972) has charged that the disenchantment which has resulted from many attempts at individualized instruction has arisen because only one of these dimensions of the learning process, rate of learning, is individualized. Cormier and Nye have individualized the rate dimension, and their description of various methods and techniques to change specific trainee behaviors represents individualization of content and mode.

The major research thrust arising from the application of the discrimination model proposed by Cormier and Nye (1972) is a comprehensive comparison of the training procedures proposed in their model with those used in other models, in terms of their comparative power and efficiency to bring about behaviorally-defined and observable counselor-trainee behaviors. It is not enough that the procedures in the discrimination model succeed in bringing about desired behavior in counselor-trainees; these procedures must be demonstrated to bring about desired behaviors more efficiently and at higher criterion levels than do the procedures of other models in order to demonstrate that the model is a superior alternative.

Another area of research which relates to this particular discrimination model for training is that of investigating the efficiency of the various components or training techniques. It is important to know which procedures are effective and which are ineffective, in order to streamline the model to yield a final product which includes only those procedures which significantly add to the terminal training criterion, effective counselor-trainee discriminative behavior. For example, it may be found that self-monitoring and modeling do not significantly modify the frequency of occurrence of nervous laughter during interviews by counselor-trainees, whereas desensitization is effective. It is upon empirical evidence concerning the comparative effectiveness of specific training techniques that training models can be defended and accountability of counselor educators demonstrated.

The use of specific counselor verbal responses in specific situations may be based upon the discrimination model. The investigation of the specific effects of counselor verbal responses in the counseling interview on client verbal behavior is an important area which could lead to the selection of specific counselor verbal responses to bring about specific client verbal behavior. A rationale upon which to base such experimental studies is provided by Zimmer and his associates (Zimmer, Wightman, and McArthur, 1970; Hakstian, Newby, and Zimmer, 1971; and Zimmer and Pepyne, 1971). Essentially, these researchers applied factor-analytic techniques to the actual verbal behavior of Carl Rogers, Frederick Perls, and Albert Ellis in three filmed counseling interviews with a single client, Gloria (Shostrom, 1964). In the first of these studies, Zimmer, Wightman, and McArthur (1970) found twenty-nine discrete verbal response classes which described the responses of the therapists in the interviews. The authors also operationally-defined these response classes in terms of grammatical structure. Eight response classes represented the verbal behavior of Rogers, thirteen represented Perls, and six represented Ellis. Only one response class was used by two therapists, the "ability potential," which represented the verbal behavior of both Rogers and Ellis. Hakstian, Newby, and Zimmer (1971) found that the verbal behavior of the client "Gloria" differed significantly in terms of the eight dependent variables investigated as a result of the verbal behavior of the three therapists in the filmed interviews. In the Zimmer and Pepyne study of the three filmed counseling interviews (1970), Rogers, Perls, and Ellis were found

to have significantly differed in their use of five of six broad dimensions of counselor behavior, including rational analyzing, eliciting specificity, confronting, passive structuring, and reconstructuring. The authors have presented evidence that these differences in the use of intervention techniques are related to the respective theoretical orientations of the three therapists.

Auerswald (1972) and Barnabei (1972) have investigated the effects of specific responses identified in the Zimmer, Wightman, and McArthur study (1970) on client interview verbal behavior. In Auerswald's carefully controlled study, two female counselors were trained to use the "restatement" and the "interpretation" responses. In a particular experimental interview, a counselor made ten responses of one type according to signal-light cues, which were emitted on a variable-ratio schedule defined "a priori." Auerswald found differences in the effects of the two counselor verbal response classes on client production of self-referent affect statements at very low chance levels. The use of basal and extinction periods in this study yielded additional evidence to support the hypothesis that the change in client use of self-referent affect statements with counselor "interpretations" was, indeed, due to the "interpretation" response as a discriminative stimulus.

Barnabei's study (1972), although it does not provide basal or extinction data, does lend support to the hypothesis that, when the use of specific counselor verbal response classes such as the "probe," "confrontation," and "reflection" in simulated counseling interviews is "contingency-free" (or contingent only upon counselor "intuition"), client

use of specific types of words are not differentially affected. It is important to note, however, that since no basal data is presented, it could be that all three counselor response classes were equally effective in producing client self-referent words, affect words, and use of present tense verbs.

The results of these two studies do indicate that the use of specific counselor responses as discriminative stimuli may have significant effects on preferred client verbal behavior in relation to counseling goals. Another study currently in progress (Ward, 1973) is also investigating the effects of counselor verbal response classes as discriminative stimuli on client verbal behavior. However, this study has combined three sets of two counselor response classes into representations of counselor verbal styles which more closely approximate actual counselor verbal behavior in interview settings. Counselor verbal responses identified in the Zimmer, Wightman, and McArthur study (1970) were used as the pool from which to select two responses to represent the style of Carl Rogers, two responses to represent the style of Frederick Perls, and two to represent the style of Albert Ellis. Specifically, two experimental counselors were trained in the use of "restatement" and "reflection" in a "Passive-Reflective" style, in the use of "confrontation" and "focusing command" in a "Confrontative-Focusing" style, and in "rational exaggeration" and "probe" in a "Rational-Interrogative" style. Thirty-six experimental interviews with female S's are currently being conducted, from which basal , experimental, and extinction period client verbal behavior data are being collected, in order to assess the differential power of each cue-controlled counselor verbal style to produce client self-referent affect

time-orientation responses. Hypotheses in this experiment are non-directional, since the major purpose is descriptive. However, it is hoped that the results of the study will yield empirical evidence to guide counselors in the selection of a particular style to use with a specific client in order to bring about a specific change in a particular class of verbal behavior.

As Hackney (1972) has pointed out, the ultimate criterion against which both counselor training and counseling effectiveness must be measured is client behavior in the "real world." The utility of the discrimination model for counselor training, counselor selection of techniques, and counseling research is in the identification of definitive and measurable client interview behaviors, which may be viewed as "enabling outcomes." These specific client within-interview behaviors lend themselves to examination in terms of their relationships to client behavior external to the counseling interview. Eventually, it is hoped that the use of specific counselor verbal response classes will result in predictable changes in client interview verbal behavior, which will then result in the readiness of the client to select and use specific behaviors which may be applied in his/her "real world." It is proposed that the discrimination model provides a base from which to more accurately define the relationships between counselor interview behavior, client interview behavior, client extra-interview behavior, and the effects of these strategies in the client's home environment. Anything less than an understanding of these relationships represents ambiguity and rhetoric in attempts to demonstrate counseling accountability.

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